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ABSTRACT

Cooperative efforts to meet the needs of state agencies in Florida are described. The state legislature earmarks university research funds specifically for projects related to state government in Florida, and the practice is growing throughout the South. Although most universities have public service programs, the real increase in state-university liaisons has been relatively recent. The emphasis on relevance and accountability is seen as a reason for the increased stress on public service as a function of the university. It is also noted that usually colleges and universities comprise the state's largest pool of expertise in many and diverse areas of thought, and the university resources include large, well-stocked libraries, computer capabilities and research facilities. Research studies are reviewed which have assessed the level of public service activities and funding. What a university does in the way of services for the state depends upon several factors, including the size and mission of the school. Certain subject matters also dictate involvement with the state or local community considerably more than others. (LBH)

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The University: A Backup Force to State Government

When the Florida Energy Committee was formed about two years ago by that state's legislature, it had as one of its main thrusts the development of a state energy-use profile and policy. The committee soon discovered, however, that the state first needed a more refined input-output model—an economist's tool for analyzing each segment of the economy in terms of its consuming and producing capabilities. Such a matrix is valuable not only for determining which industries or businesses are most productive, but also for measuring the indirect impacts of occurrences in the economy (e.g., how would a citrus disease affect the state's transportation industry?) and for projecting employment opportunities.

Florida's Department of Commerce had such a model—in fact an extremely large one which dealt with the state's 484 industries. However, according to Richard Welsh, Administrator of Economic Planning for the Department, the model had been built with national data adjusted for Florida situations; needed was more firsthand data.

Today the Energy Committee is well on the way toward obtaining the data it needs to develop an energy-use profile; the Department of Commerce, meanwhile, has the benefit of nine separate consultants or teams researching industries around the state for an update of the model. Their sources? Florida's state universities.

Economists or other faculty from each of Florida's nine state universities are researching the industries concentrated in their vicinities. For the University of South Florida in Tampa, the focus is on food processing; for Florida International University in Miami, tourism; for Florida Atlantic in Boca Raton, electronics and computers. The cost of this research program is picked up by the state university system, the Florida Energy Committee and the Department of Commerce. (The latter provides in-kind services.)

This cooperative effort to meet the needs of state agencies is becoming increasingly popular not only in Florida, where the legislature actually earmarks university research funds specifically for projects related to state government, but throughout the region. At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, for example, the Institute of Government helps state officials draft new legislation and publishes a daily bulletin describing what's happening in the legislature.

Centers for environmental studies, such as that at Virginia, and coastal facilities, such as the Georgia Marine Institute on Sapelo Island, are active in state-related ecological environmental studies. And manpower training projects for state employees ranging from teachers to game wardens are now often standing contracts between states and universities.

Indeed, whether it's determining the ecological management and land-use of Florida's Green Swamp or doing a state-directed study on tax modernization and reform in Tennessee, the university is increasingly looked to as a resource for state problem-solving.

Although most universities have public service programs—and land-grant institutions have them as a central function—the real increase in state-university liaisons has been relatively recent. As Dr. Gene Bramlett, Assistant Vice President for Services at the University of Georgia, put it recently in an interview, "It's only in the last 10 or 15 years that we've had general acceptance for public service in fields other than agriculture."

The opposition to public service has been partly philosophic. It's been held, for example, that because teaching is the primary mission of a university, it should not do anything but that and basic research, which is necessary to attract good faculty and to further the development of knowledge.

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There are also arguments about the inherent superiority of basic (i.e., theoretical) research as opposed to applied (field) research.

The logic of that philosophy is no longer convincing, however. If the mission of a university is to transfer knowledge, as one official of a large university in the region phrased it, then it should include not just students, but also "our legislature, government employees, business and many others. They all need knowledge to enable them to be informed and to operate efficiently. . .One-shot training is not enough to last a lifetime."

Moreover, the lines between basic and applied research are rather fuzzy. If a scientist does a study of the food chains in a marsh it may be basic research; if, however, he's doing it because the state plans to put a highway through it, it is applied. And, as Bramlett points out, "in the social sciences the world is the student's laboratory," and thus applied research, for which public service is often an avenue, is not only desirable but necessary.

There are also more practical reasons. One, as John Cairns, Director of the Center for Environmental Studies at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, put it recently, is that many universities which have failed to relate their research to practical application are "now suffering from a lack of grants and have been forced to cut back research programs."

This emphasis on relevance and accountability is a further reason, perhaps, for the increased stress on public service as a function of the university. It cannot be ignored that when a faculty member develops a good working relationship with state government, the institution usually gains a supporter. As Bramlett commented, "While this is not the purpose of rendering public service, it is a a valuable by-product which quelches many of the academic arguments set forth against it."

From the state's vantage point there are also growing reasons for looking to the university as a resource. In most cases colleges and universities comprise the state's largest pool of expertise in many and diverse areas of thought. Also, at least in terms of subject matter, many academic departments correspond to the issues facing state government—not only in such obvious areas as political science, social work, education and public administration, but also in economics, medicine and law, and environmental design. Moreover, the university resources include large, well-stocked libraries, computer capabilities and research facilities.

One-shot training is not enough

Exactly how committed the Southern university is to public service to state government, and how more and better services could be provided to solve the states' complex problems were two questions that a recently completed Board study set out to answer. Directed by Dr. Bramlett, it was supported by the Research Applied to National Needs (RANN) Directorate of the National Science Foundation.

That study, entitled *The Academic Community: A Backup Force to State Government* and based on data obtained by questionnaires and/or interviews with 84 colleges and universities in the region (including all of the 59 publicly-supported doctoral degree granting institutions) indicates a substantial level of involvement. (Six major universities located outside the region were also studied to gain additional perspectives on conditions and attitudes in the region.)

The level of public service activities and funding varies substantially (from under $100,000 annually to over $15 million). The Southern institutions averaged $763,000 in funded services to their state governments in 1972-73 (a figure which adds up to about $14 million per state in the region). Project researchers also found college and university administrators very much committed to the concept of public service. Dr. Charles Perry, President of Florida International University, summed it up this way, "We've got to replace the 'publish or perish' syndrome with 'service or silence.'"

The extent to which state agencies are drawing upon the resources of local universities and colleges was also documented in the Bramlett study through the circulation of questionnaires among 224 units of state government in the region. (The functional areas covered the gamut from Departments of Industry and Trade to Human Resources.) It was found that nearly three-fourths of the state agency officials had requested some kind of service from a university or college in the state within the past year.

What constitutes a public service project varies widely, although universities generally define it as a service which results from the official provision by an institution of staff time, materials or equipment for training, research (usually applied), planning or technical consultations. Within those wide parameters, it might range from an hour's worth of "horseback evaluation" by a veterinary professor at a local cattle farm to a year's study to determine how to establish viable economic bases in the small town and rural

areas of the state.

Generally, public service falls into four categories. The first—in terms of both state agencies' needs and universities' assessments of their own capabilities as service agents—is that of training and educating the employees of state government. This may include formal training of teachers or police personnel, or special workshops for fiscal officers of state government.

The other university capabilities, in order of their use by state agencies, are: technical/program services (e.g., preparation of a survey questionnaire on "citizen priorities" for the governor, or research on which grass is best for mountain highway shoulders); policy-planning services (research or consultation pertaining to the overall program of an individual agency or of the state as a whole, such as in pollution control or public housing); and administrative/procedural changes (e.g., working with the agency's personnel section to develop new application forms).

What often happens is that a particular project will primarily involve teaching and technical consultation, but end up having an indirect effect or input into policy-making. For example, in the Sixties the head of the pediatrics and child care section of Georgia's then Department of Health approached the Georgia Center for Continuing Education for help concerning standards for day care centers and workers. Although the state had identified 800 day care centers in the state, there were at that time, no regulations governing them or the workers, except for fire safety legislation.

The Center invited experts in every aspect of child care—from recreation to nutrition—to pool their ideas on the essential elements of a training program for the development of day care center managers and teachers. After two such meetings, as well as an extensive resource-gathering phase in local communities, a preliminary outline was handed over to two University of Georgia faculty members who subsequently spent an academic year developing a syllabus for the course.

Concurrently, the Center began identifying people in the state's major population centers who had a special interest in early childhood education. By summer, the syllabus was used as the basis for a six-week course, offered through the extension delivery system, for the training of day care managers and teachers.

This 90-hour course, taken by hundreds of people over the next several years, was influential in determining licensing regulations and policies of day care workers—not just within the state, but nationwide. In fact, when President Johnson launched a nationwide day care program, the Center was again contacted to teach its management and training course. Fifty teachers were expected; over 1,300 showed up. Through this means and others, the syllabus and ideas generated at the Center were distributed all over the country.

What a university does in the way of services for the state depends on several factors—including the size and mission of the school. A small liberal arts college can often not spare resources for work of this nature.

Service or silence

However, within large universities with numerous schools the extent of commitment is often considerable. Bramlett found that universities and colleges with student enrollments of over 10,000 accounted for more than 80 percent of the funded public service activities in the region. Similarly, preliminary findings of an ongoing Board study on faculty evaluation procedures indicate that public service receives the highest rating (in terms of its recognition as a factor in determining promotion, tenure and salary increases) among the public doctorate degree-granting institutions.

Likewise, certain subject matters dictate involvement with the state or local community. Comparative literature and math, for example, have relatively low public service profiles; on the other hand, education and business are more heavily involved in public service on any campus. So are professional schools. Many law schools have public service institutes, for example, such as North Carolina Central University's Center for Health Law which provides advisory and bill-drafting services to state legislators for health legislation. And in the health fields, public service can seem at times also indistinguishable from many learning experiences, because hospitals and state health agencies are often, literally, the "classrooms."

In addition, many universities—such as the Universities of North Carolina, Tennessee, Georgia and Virginia—have separate institutes of government to concentrate on public service. In some institutes the staff, though paid by the university, have no connection with the academic departments; in other cases, the staffs hold joint appointments with the academic departments. Such institutes can also vary considerably in emphasis; some are primarily urban and community oriented; others almost constitute "research arms" of the state.

An Interview with Gene Bramlett

Perspectives On Public Service

The following discussion of campus-capital relationships—the problems encountered and their possible solutions—is based on SREB's study, The Academic Community: A Backup Force to State Government, *and an intensive interview with the principle investigator and director of that project, Dr. Gene A. Bramlett. Dr. Bramlett is Assistant Vice President for Services at the University of Georgia, as well as Associate Professor of Economics.*

What type of organizational structure is most appropriate for the delivery of public service?

This is a tangled and very controversial issue, nationally. Some feel that public service/extension work and personnel should be segregated from the teaching/research faculty; that is, public service should be operated more or less independently. In unusually large institutions, where public service budgets extend into the tens of millions of dollars, this may be appropriate.

Another argument is that each appropriate budgetary unit of the institution—that is, departments and schools—should be allocated funds for public service and explicitly given the charge to serve outside groups. At least one university has combined these approaches. There, each department is line-budgeted for public service, but there is also a centralized "delivery system" to facilitate contacts between requesting agencies or parties and the appropriate university department.

It appears from the SREB study that the university and college officials in the region reflect this national diversity of opinion on the ideal structure for the delivery of public services. In other words, there was no clear consensus among them on the principles that enable public service to operate successfully.

What appear to be major barriers to more effective working relationships between the two groups?

There was surprising agreement among university/college officials and state agency officials about the obstacles to better relationships. The major impediments were what we termed "program and policy limitations," which include such things as the limited awards available for faculty; the time-lags between state agency requests for services and university capabilities to deliver them; and agency limitations due to regulations, fixed policy or legislative constraints.

Other factors are the shortage of funds to finance work for state government; poor communication between the two groups; and detrimental attitudes held by state and university employees—which often amount to stereotypes that each group has about the other.

A number of respondents from both groups indicated that universities are not organizationally equipped to deal with the problems of state government. I think what they're really saying here is that there is a basic organizational difference between state agencies and universities. The university has a scheduled set of processes (classes) offered under set timeframes (semesters or quarters) that are fairly difficult to change. On the other hand, state agencies don't have a schedule-orientation, particularly at the beginning of a new administration, when there's this tremendous surge of enthusiasm, an exuberance which spills out into a surge of new programs. It's a time of demanding governors and staff who see themselves as saviors who are really going to change things. It's not uncommon for staff people under a new governor to be working until midnight, 18 hours a day.

One way to get around this basic problem of time is to have a separate public service division within the university. If you have fulltime public service personnel, they're not hamstrung by schedules; they can go when someone calls.

Are these basic organizational differences between the state and the university reflected at all among their respective employees? If so, how inhibiting are these differences in developing university-state agency liaisons?

Both state agency officials and university officials talked about poor communications between the groups and about attitudes which inhibited interaction and cooperation. Often this boils down to a basic conflict in approach. There is a resentment sometimes among state agencies, for example, that professors "want to use us to test their theories," or that faculty are "excessively idealistic or crusading." One state official summed it up this way, "State government is dealing with real problems on an urgent basis; university people deal with theoretical problems on a relaxed basis."

On the other hand, university personnel may complain that agencies want an immediate practical solution, not indepth analysis. The agency official seems to be saying, "Let's put out the immediate fire. This might be part of a larger

problem, but we don't have time to tackle that." But the professor is thinking, "That's just the symptom; let's back up and look at the cause." Some faculty also complain that state agencies expect them to do mostly mundane leg work.

I do think there can be a basic lack of sympathy on the part of the university personnel for how state government operates. The university just doesn't understand that an administrator may have neither time nor money to do a long-range project—or that it might be politically embarrassing to pursue. Because of the differences in organization and perspective of the two groups, I sometimes wonder if personality isn't more important when it comes to dealing effectively with state government than what the faculty member knows. There's already a stereotype among many state officials that the university people "think they're smarter," so it's very important that the university person not approach government people with the attitude that "We've got all these resources so we're going to help you with all your problems."

Did you find that there is a fear among university faculty of political entanglement or political repercussions if they become involved with government?

Ever since a professor in a Midwestern university ran into trouble years ago after doing research which favorably compared margarine with butter, there's been a sort of legend that academia should build barriers or the government will take over; the prevailing fear was that government would force you to bias your results.

So we expected this undercurrent of fear to reflect itself as a barrier to more effective working relationships with state governments. But it didn't; it was only a minor factor. Actually, that kind of

Gene Bramlett: "Among university administrators in the SREB region there is a tremendous commitment to public service."

pressure from the state is relatively rare these days and it's a largely unfounded fear. Professors will still encounter pressure sometimes, but there are ways out.

Is there a discrepancy in reward structures for public service personnel?

Although at many institutions public service personnel are treated no differently than other faculty in terms of promotions in rank, tenure and salary, many schools participating in our study indicated that there was some difference in reward factors. For example, tenure policies are different at more than one-third of the institutions in the region; and at 27 percent of the schools, promotion-in-rank policies are dissimilar for public service personnel.

"Different" doesn't necessarily have a negative connotation; however, other results of the study (such as follow-up interviews and written-in comments) strongly suggested that "different" generally means that persons engaged in public service activities fare less well in the internal rewards system than teaching/research faculty.

Generally, when the university starts adding more public services and certain faculty members begin working full-time outside their discipline, that's when the real problems start, because by long tradition tenure and promotions are granted by schools and departments. It can really be very difficult for those in the business department, for example, to make a judgment on a person who technically has a degree in business but who has been working for some time across campus in public service. That person may have really drifted away from his parent discipline, and the department is understandably reluctant to pass judgment on his work. We need a career ladder that will permit people in public service to be tenured outside of the professorial role.

Is there a real commitment to public service within the universities and colleges in the Southern region?

Definitely. Public service has brought people in contact with the university who previously saw it only at a football game; and it has brought real support from these people. Public service is so accepted now that you can't really develop arguments against it that will hold up. Some people may still have reservations, perhaps, but among university administrators in the region there is a tremendous commitment to public service.

Where you still run into resistance is with the old-line academic departments. The problem there is that the faculty don't understand public service; they see it as PR work. Also, they don't think it carries any academic prestige. These people are more inclined to be peer-oriented; they care much more about how professors in similar departments at other universities view their work than how a state official does. But this resistance to public service is fading away—there's no question about it. There's an upward trend of major universities to be involved in public service of one kind or another.

Universities Meeting States' Needs: "You've Got to Know the Territory"

When a conference-workshop on the academic community's capabilities of responding to state government needs was held recently by the Board, the theme was on the future, but the metaphor was strictly from the old West. "You've got to know the territory" became a refrain used to highlight the very different environments or territories in which state government personnel and university faculty work.

The conference was held in Atlanta May 5-6, as one follow-up to a recent Board study, supported by a grant from the National Science Foundation Program of Research Applied to National Needs (NSF-RANN). It was attended by representatives from the executive or legislative branches of the 14 Southern states, the members of each state's higher education agency, and representatives from a limited number of public universities.

SREB's study had documented areas in which state officials felt that universities could be of particular assistance in the future. (See chart below.) Topping the list were environmental concerns, comprehensive long-range planning and growth policies, and energy issues. As the report and conference participants quickly pointed out, these are all areas that are multi-disciplinary or involve highly technical issues. They are also issues which are relatively new and for which there is no one existing agency to coordinate activities or policy-making.

This lack of defined territories and the interdisciplinary nature of the issues are among the reasons why the states, presumably, are looking to the universities for assistance.

That the university can bring its expertise to bear on such problems is, as one conferee phrased it, "Not a matter of if, but of when and how." There was virtually unanimous belief that, as C. Brice Ratchford, President of the University of Missouri, phrased it, "Given the laboratories, faculty, students and base of knowledge present at the university, and the sequitur that decisions are improved by up-to-date knowledge, it absolutely follows that the university should be part of the decision-making" in state government today.

To consider ways in which the university should go about being a backup force to state government, the conference was organized around the discussion of recommendations, garnered from state officials and college and university administrators in the Board study of the subject.

1) One of these recommendations was that a coordinating council comprised of representatives of the academic community and state government be established in states, where appropriate, to serve as facilitator or "harmonizer" in improving working relationships between the two groups.

Dr. Gene Bramlett (see centerspread), who directed the study and moderated the conference, interpreted this not as a governing body that would divide up funds or assign projects, but as an advisory group that would meet on a short-term basis (perhaps at the request of the governor), look into the obstacles to closer relationships between colleges and agencies in a state, try to smooth them out, and perhaps disband upon completion of its task.

This interpretation was favored by conferees, who saw it as a body that would act as a "brokerage" or, in President Ratchford's phraseology, "a regular and continuing seminar on what's down the road five or ten years from now."

2) A second study recommendation was that state agencies be encouraged to reassess the ways in which they could draw upon the resources of educational institutions. Several conference representatives indicated that reassessment, "will grow naturally out of better communication between the groups."

Earl M. Starnes, Director of the Division of State Planning in Florida, asserted, "State agencies by and large are not dominated by futures. They are dominated by directors and chiefs and all sorts of people who handle the business of state government and who are, unfortunately, very much in the bog of bureaucracy—with few energies left to look to the future." Starnes and others felt that, given this orientation, it might be appropriate for the university to be more aggressive about informing state agencies of its service capabilities.

3) Another recommendation was that units of state government facing the chronic problem of inability to pay for university services should establish separate line items in their budgets to be used when needed during a budget cycle for service obtained from academic institutions.

One reason why such line-iteming in budgets is necessary, is that universities and state agencies are both locked into current budget cycles that are not easy to break. Thus, they don't have readily available funds when needed.

Although there were some dissenters, there was a general feeling that money is a major problem —some indicated it to be "the problem"—both for universities

and state agencies. They stressed the need both for hard money, appropriated yearly, on which both state agencies and universities could count, and discretionary money that could be applied to unforeseen needs.

It was also brought out that very few state agencies are willing to give 50 to 60 per cent overhead costs to universities—the percentage which the federal government averages. Separate overhead rates for state government are negotiated and agreed to by state legislatures in several states.

4) There was some diversity of opinion on the study suggestion that a position be established within central boards of higher education to encourage and help coordinate services to state government.

This variety of opinion reflects the fact that the states within the region have very different organizations. (As one participant observed, "How did we ever come to be known as the Solid South?") Some states are organized under three separate systems—one for doctorate degree-granting institutions, one for four-year colleges, one for junior colleges. Others have just one system for post-secondary education.

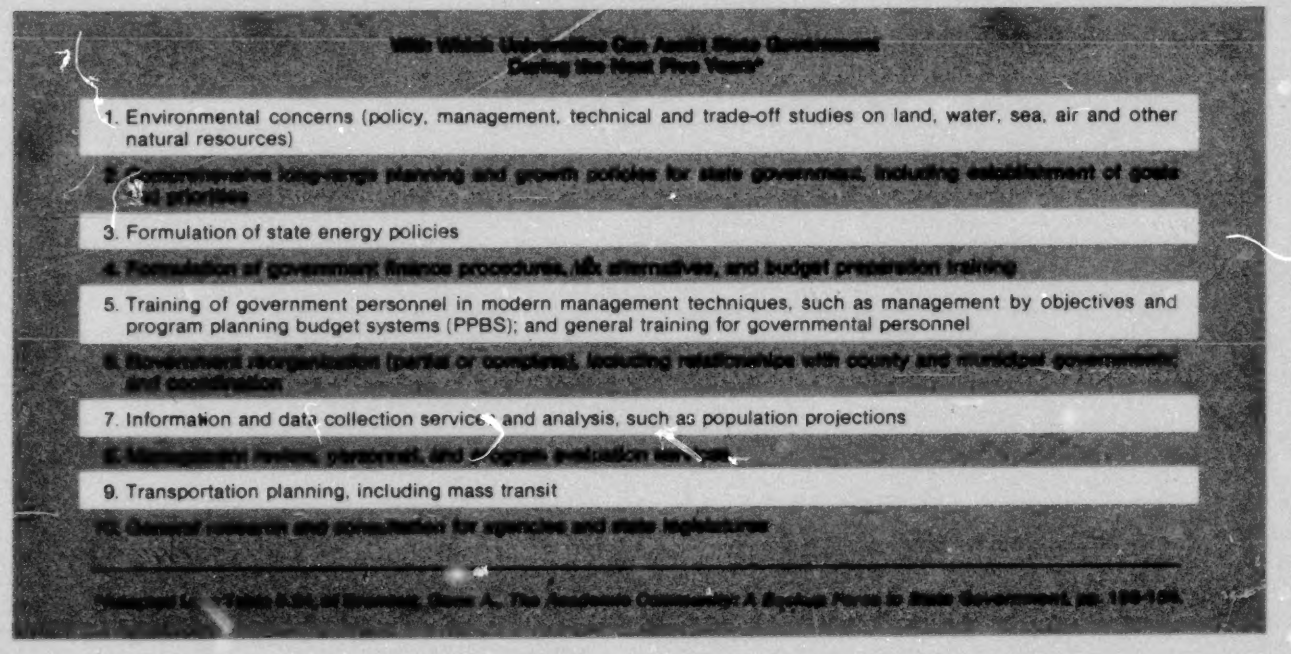
One state which has a central position responsible for services reported that such a position at the Board of Regents level gives a real "status value" and point of contact for public service.

5) There was a rallying of opinion around the final two study recommendations, the first being that higher educational institutions develop appropriate mechanisms and procedures to enable them to be more responsive and effective in delivering public service. Included under these capabilities in need of improvement were funding arrangements (they should be regular), multi-disciplinary organization (i.e., a means of tapping the full range of the institution's resources), and a means of communicating to state government what service capabilities the university has to offer (printing a service inventory).

Computer-based information systems were suggested as one means for legislatures to obtain technical assistance; another recommended model was a research and development center, under the canopy of education, which would keep all research reports on file. Pre-legislative workshops for state officials held at university institutes to examine upcoming legislation, more clinically oriented graduate programs, and more use of student and faculty internships were also discussed.

6) The final study recommendation—that measurable performance standards for university/college faculty members engaged in public service be formulated—evoked general consensus, best summarized in the statement, "There will be no involvement without incentives." Some felt that separate career ladders should be developed for public service; others proposed joint staff appointments to solve promotional and tenure problems.

Top Ten Problem Areas


1. Environmental concerns (policy, management, technical and trade-off studies on land, water, sea, air and other natural resources)
3. Formulation of state energy policies
5. Training of government personnel in modern management techniques, such as management by objectives and program planning budget systems (PPBS); and general training for governmental personnel
7. Information and data collection services and analysis, such as population projections
9. Transportation planning, including mass transit